

REC-1159

(Landmarks)

DESIGNATING THE ISLAM TEMPLE (ALCAZAR THEATER) AT 650 GEARY STREET AS A LANDMARK PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 10 OF THE CITY PLANNING CODE.

Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:

Section 1. The Board of Supervisors hereby finds that Islam Temple (Alcazar Theater) located at 650 Geary Street, being Lots 19 and 23 in Assessor's Block 304, has a special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value, and that its designation as a landmark will further the purposes of, and conform to the standards set forth in Article 10 of the City Planning Code.

(a) Designation: Pursuant to Section 1004 of the City Planning Code, Chapter II, Part II of the San Francisco Municipal Code, the Islam Temple (Alcazar Theater) is hereby designated as a Landmark, this designation having been fully approved by Resolution No. 11689 of the City Planning Commission, which Resolution is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors under File No. 90-89-4.

(b) Required Data: The description of the location and boundaries of the Landmark site, of the characteristics of the Landmark which justify its designation, and of the particular features that should be preserved are included in the said Resolution, and incorporated in this designating ordinance as though fully set forth.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
LOUISE H. RENNE
CITY ATTORNEY

By [Signature]
Deputy City Attorney

RECOMMENDED:
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

By [Signature]
Dean L. Macris
Director of Planning

Board of Supervisors, San Francisco

Passed for Second Reading

September 5, 1989

Ayes: Supervisors Alioto Britt
Gonzalez Hallinan Hongisto Hsieh
Kennedy Maher Walker Ward

Absent: Supervisors Nelder

§ Finally Passed

§ September 11, 1989

§ Ayes: Supervisors Alioto Britt
§ Gonzalez Hallinan Hsieh Kennedy
§ Maher Walker

§ Absent: Supervisors Hongisto Nelder
§ Ward

I hereby certify that the foregoing ordinance was finally passed by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco

SEP 18 1989

SEP 1 1989

File No.
90-89-4

Date Approved

[Signature] Clerk
[Signature] Mayor

File No. 89.269L
Islam Temple (Alcazar Theater)
650 Geary Street

SAN FRANCISCO
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION NO. 11689

WHEREAS, A proposal to designate the Islam Temple (Alcazar Theater) at 650 Geary Street as a Landmark pursuant to the provisions of Article 10 of the City Planning Code was initiated by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on May 17, 1989 and said Advisory Board, after due consideration, has recommended approval of this proposal; and

WHEREAS, The City Planning Commission, after due notice given, held a public hearing on June 15, 1989 to consider the proposed designation and the report of said Advisory Board; and

WHEREAS, This Commission believes that the proposed Landmark has a special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value; and that the proposed designation would be in furtherance of and in conformance with the purposes and standards of the said Article 10;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, First, That this Landmark Board does hereby recommend APPROVAL of the designation of the Islam Temple (Alcazar Theater) at 650 Geary Street being Lots 19 and 23 in Assessor's Block 304;

Second, That the special character and special historical, architectural and aesthetic interest and value of the said Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board Resolution No. 417 as adopted on May 17, 1989 which Resolution is incorporated herein and made a part thereof as though fully set forth;

Third, that the said Landmark should be preserved generally in all of its particular exterior features as existing on the date hereof and described and depicted in the photographs, case report and other material on file in the Department of City Planning Docket No. 89.269L.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board hereby directs its Secretary to transmit the proposal for designation, with a copy of this Resolution, to the Board of Supervisors for appropriate action.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the City Planning Commission on June 15, 1989.

Lori Yamauchi
Secretary

AYES: Commissioners Bierman, Boldridge, Dick, Engmann, Hu, Karasick and Morales

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ADOPTED: June 15, 1989

VFM:mj:520

BUILDING NAME: ISLAM TEMPLE (ALCAZAR THEATER) OWNER: METRO-POST, LIMITED
BUILDING ADDRESS: 650 GEARY STREET BLOCK & LOT: 304/19 ZONING: RC-4 and 23
ORIGINAL USE: SHRINER MEETING HALL NO. OF STORIES: 2 LPAB VOTE: 7-0
CURRENT USE: FORMER THEATER AND PARKING GARAGE EXTERIOR MATERIALS: STUCCO, TILE

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architecturally one of the most unusual downtown buildings, this elaborately eclectic fantasy reflects the cultural interests of its original owner/occupants who utilized Moorish motifs in their ceremonies. The facade, with Byzantine arches and filigree lattice work, is primarily of ornate polychrome terra cotta with a granite water table. The ground floor houses a commercial garage with neon signage. (over)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

A. ARCHITECTURE

1. Style: Moorish/Byzantine Eclectic
2. Construction Type: Steel and concrete
3. Construction Date: 1917
4. Design Quality: Excellent
5. Architect: T(homas) Paterson Ross (1873-1957) (see page 2)
6. Interior Quality: N/A

B. HISTORY

7. Persons: This building was associated with the Shriners, who are significant to the public primarily through their charitable works.
8. Events: The Islam Temple, Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of Mystic Shrine was used for Shriner meetings and ceremonies from 1918 to 1970. Later the building functioned as a small theater in the tradition of the original Alcazar Theater which was originally located on O'Farrell Street..
9. Patterns of History: In the late nineteenth century, exotic smoking rooms and parlors of Oriental or Persian inspiration became a fashionable style. Around the turn of the century, neoclassicism (over)

C. ENVIRONMENT

10. Continuity: This building is so extraordinary in its design that it offers little in the way of continuity to the street.
11. Setting: Building to the lot line, Ross took advantage of the site's southern exposure to develop a richly textured facade with numerous recesses and balconies. The effect vividly recreates the interplay of shadow and light characteristic of Moorish architecture.
12. Importance as a Visual Landmark: Highly important and visible in the context of the downtown.

D. INTEGRITY

13. Facade intact; including western-most commercial storefront interior water damage due to roof damage and temporary shoring of walls.

RATINGS

DGP: 5
HERE TODAY: p. 68
SPLENDID SURV.: N/A
NAT'L REGISTER: Probably eligible
NAT'L LANDMARK: No
STATE LANDMARK: No

BIBLIOGRAPHY: see p. 2

PREPARED BY: Chris Krahn, Intern
and Patrick McGrew
ADDRESS: 450 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
PHONE: (415) 558-6345
DATE: April 19, May 11 and 17, 1989

VFM:atm/501



This building is successor to the original Alcazar Theater which was located on O'Farrell Street and first opened in 1885. The original Alcazar, a family theater beloved to San Francisco residents, was also designed in a Moorish style. It was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and rebuilt shortly thereafter. In the 1910's the Alcazar was one of the four major theaters in San Francisco. After the rebuilt Alcazar on O'Farrell Street was torn down in 1963 to make room for a parking lot, a new 499-seat Alcazar Theater reopened in the present building at 650 Geary Street.

The present building, constructed at a cost of \$150,000, was declared "one of the finest shrine temples in America" (Bulletin, 1/26/18). The temple was "an adaptation from Alhambra, a building that stands as the highest mark of Arabian art and civilization." (Architect & Engineer, June 1917).

5. Architect (continued)

T. Paterson Ross was himself a Shriner, but he was also a prominent local architect whose career spanned the years 1890-1924. He was especially productive in the post-earthquake years. His commissions of over 250 structures include such important commercial buildings as Sing Fat (1907) 555-97 Grant Avenue, Sing Chong (1908) at 615 Grant Avenue, the Donohoe Building (Imperial Savings Building) (1908) at 99 Battery Street, the Baldwin Hotel, 321 Grant Street (1910), The Union League Building (now the Press Club) (1922) at 555 Post Street. Some of the extant residential buildings include 2210 Clay Street (1904), 21 Presidio Terrace (1910), the Chatham Apartments at 1750 Sacramento Street (1912), Capo di Monte at 2111 Hyde Street (1924), and 433 Arguello Boulevard (1896) which was built as his own residence.

9. Patterns of History (continued)

combined with the Middle Eastern influence to create a new style that was popular with theaters. This particular building also reflects an era when influential fraternal organizations built elaborate ritualized meeting halls.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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